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| K.D., Appellant |) | |
| |) | |
| and |) | Docket No. 21-1320 |
| |) | Issued: April 25, 2022 |
| U.S. POSTAL SERVICE, POST OFFICE, |) | |
| Indianapolis, IN, Employer |) | |
| |) | |

Case Submitted on the Record

Before:
ALEC J. KOROMILAS, Chief Judge
PATRICIA H. FITZGERALD, Deputy Chief Judge
JANICE B. ASKIN, Judge

On April 21, 2021 appellant, then a 26-year-old group leader mail handler, filed an occupational disease claim (Form CA-2) alleging that, beginning on November 15, 2020, she sustained rheumatoid arthritis and inflamed rotator cuff tear due to a crushed hand work injury. She explained that she developed extensive pain shooting up her arm from her injured hand and was told the pain would eventually cause damage to her arm. OWCP assigned this claim OWCP File No. xxxxxx524.

The Board has duly considered the matter and concludes that this case is not in posture for decision. OWCP's procedures provide that cases should be administratively combined when

correct adjudication of the issues depends on frequent cross-referencing between files.¹ For example, if a new injury case is reported for an employee who previously filed an injury claim for a similar condition or the same part of the body, doubling is required.² Herein, appellant had a prior claim for a right hand contusion and crush injury, assigned OWCP File No. xxxxxx692. She subsequently filed an occupational disease claim for the same region of the body on April 21, 2021, assigned OWCP File No. xxxxxx524, which is the claim presently before the Board.

For a full and fair adjudication, the case must be returned to OWCP to administratively combine the current case record, OWCP File No. xxxxxx524, with OWCP File No. xxxxxx692. On remand, OWCP should review all relevant evidence to determine whether appellant has established that she sustained rheumatoid arthritis and inflamed rotator cuff tear in the performance of duty. Following this and such further development as OWCP deems necessary, it shall issue a *de novo* decision. Accordingly,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the July 20, 2021 decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is set aside and the case is remanded for further proceedings consistent with this order of the Board.

Issued: April 25, 2022
Washington, DC

Alec J. Koromilas, Chief Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

Patricia H. Fitzgerald, Deputy Chief Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

Janice B. Askin, Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

¹ Federal (FECA) Procedure Manual, Part 2 -- Claims, *File Maintenance and Management*, Chapter 2.400.8(c) (February 2000).

² *Id.*; *S.G.*, Docket No. 21-0396 (issued September 27, 2021); *R.L.*, Docket No. 20-0901 (issued July 27, 2021); *M.E.*, Docket No. 21-0094 (issued May 27, 2021); *L.M.*, Docket No. 19-1490 (issued January 29, 2020); *L.H.*, Docket No 18-1777 (issued July 2, 2019).